

NEW JERSEY COLLEGES:

Normal Schools to Teachers Colleges

New Jersey's Six Colleges for Public School Educators, Now Observing a Century of Growth, Had Like Experiences Facing Up to Early Detractors and Economic Setbacks

By **JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM**

"... How it can happen that a man shall need to serve an apprenticeship to make a boot, but can instruct and train a child by instinct, is more than I can understand."

IN those terse words Horace Mann answered a New Jersey questioner who in 1854 asked the great educator whether the state really needed a special school to train teachers. Horace Mann never minced words when it came to education; today, as New Jersey's six teachers colleges celebrate a century of growth and face a decade of challenge, his words seem as much an educational rallying cry as they were in 1854.

From the standpoint of exactness, only the colleges at Trenton, Newark and Paterson are a century old (and purists hasten to point out that Newark and Paterson started as city rather than state schools). Only Trenton is making much of its centennial year, but it isn't far wrong to declare that the year-long centennial celebration at Trenton belongs to all six teachers colleges.

The six can be separated from the standpoints of history or geography or architecture or traditions, but all have a common root. That wasn't completely recognized, perhaps even by the teachers colleges themselves at times, until the six banded together in 1951 to promote a 15-million-dollar

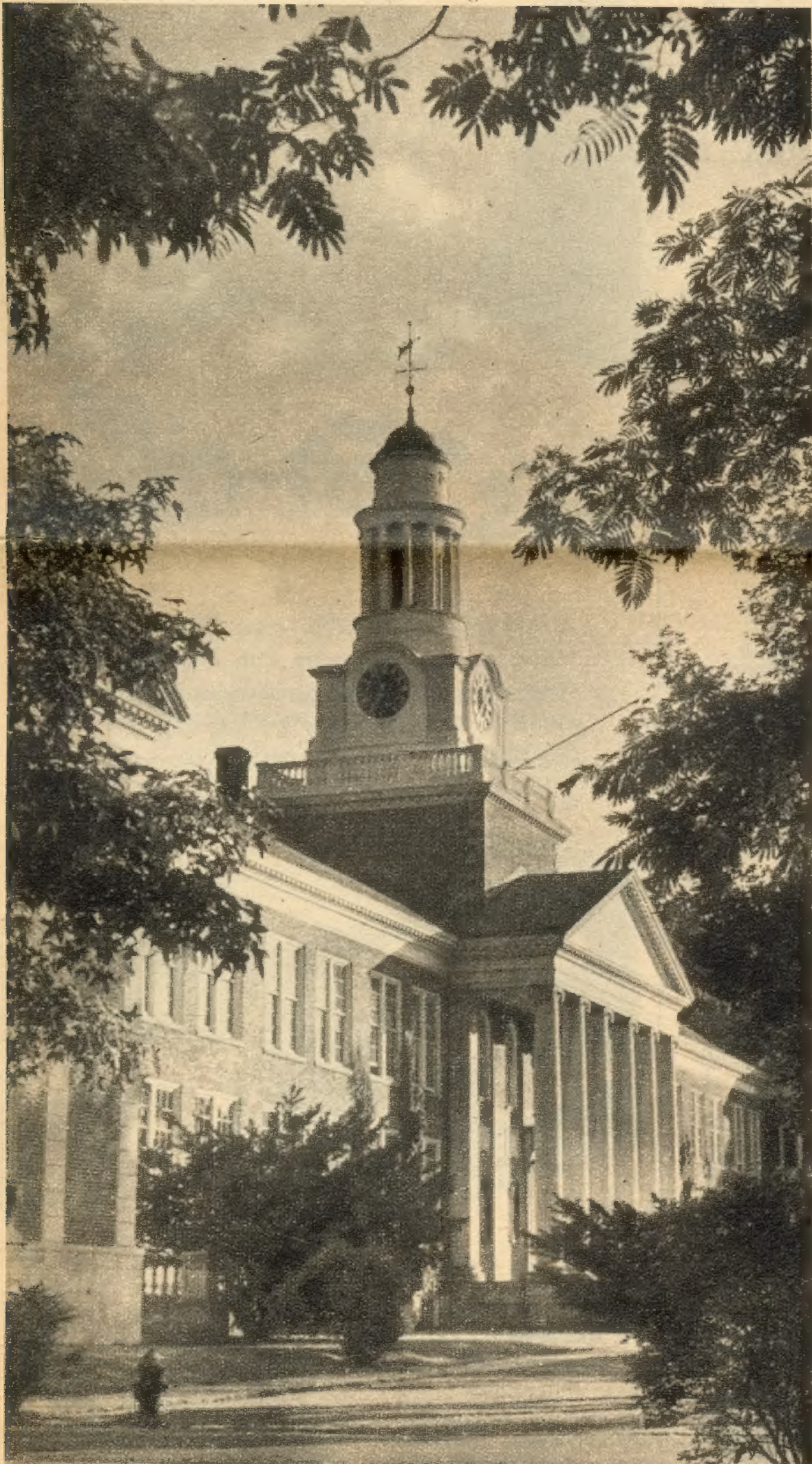
bond issue for modernization of their campuses. That campaign, probably more than anything in all their combined histories, made the teachers colleges fully realize they weren't a half dozen trees of different species but six branches of the one same tree.

IF a hundredth anniversary seems somewhat a delayed time to recognize the family tree, consider the poor educational climate when the first shoot was planted under state auspices in Trenton in 1855. Two of the branches (Montclair and Glassboro) didn't even sprout until the 20th Century. Three others (Newark, Paterson and Jersey City) had to be fed for decades by city rather than state funds.

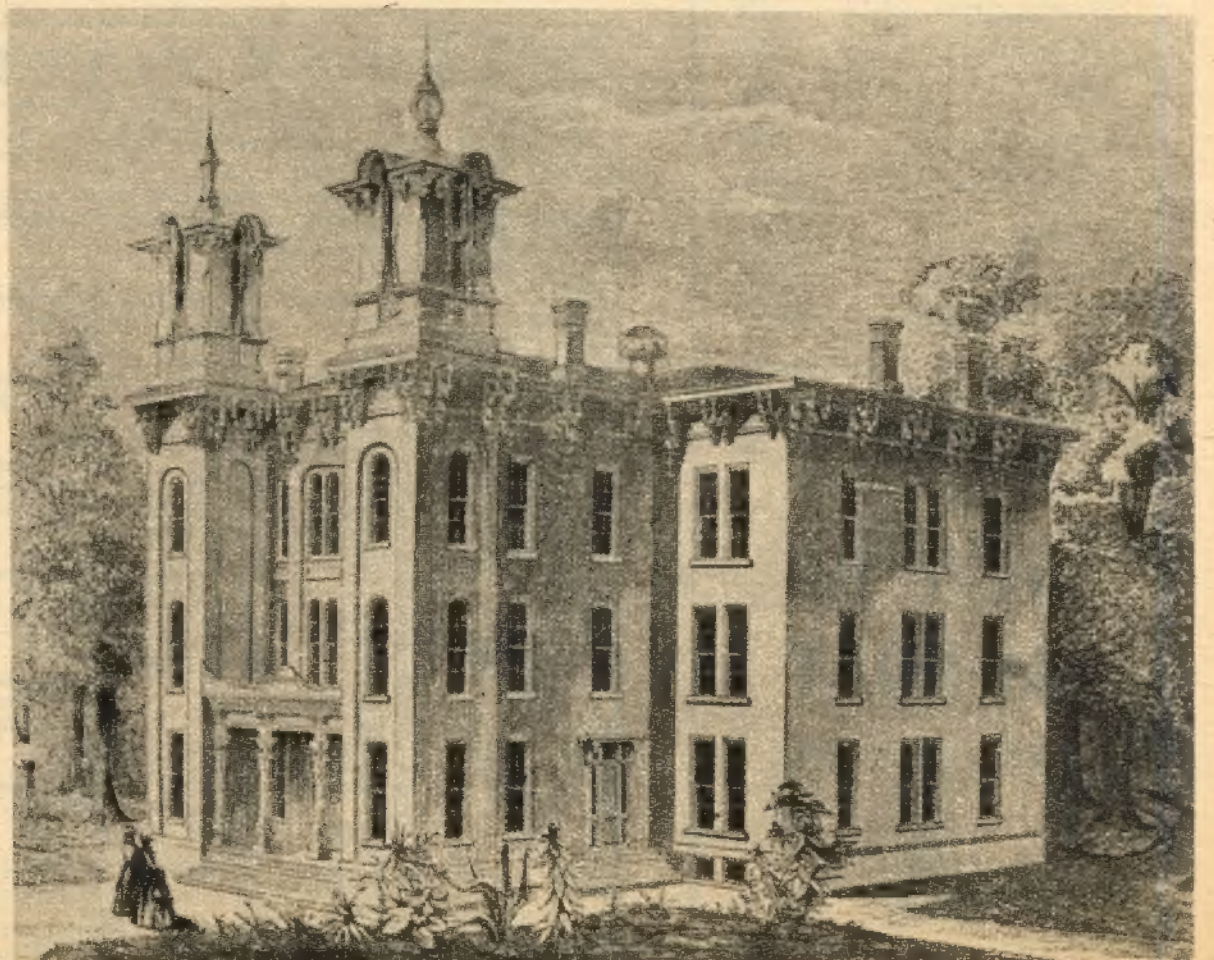
New Jersey never applied the food

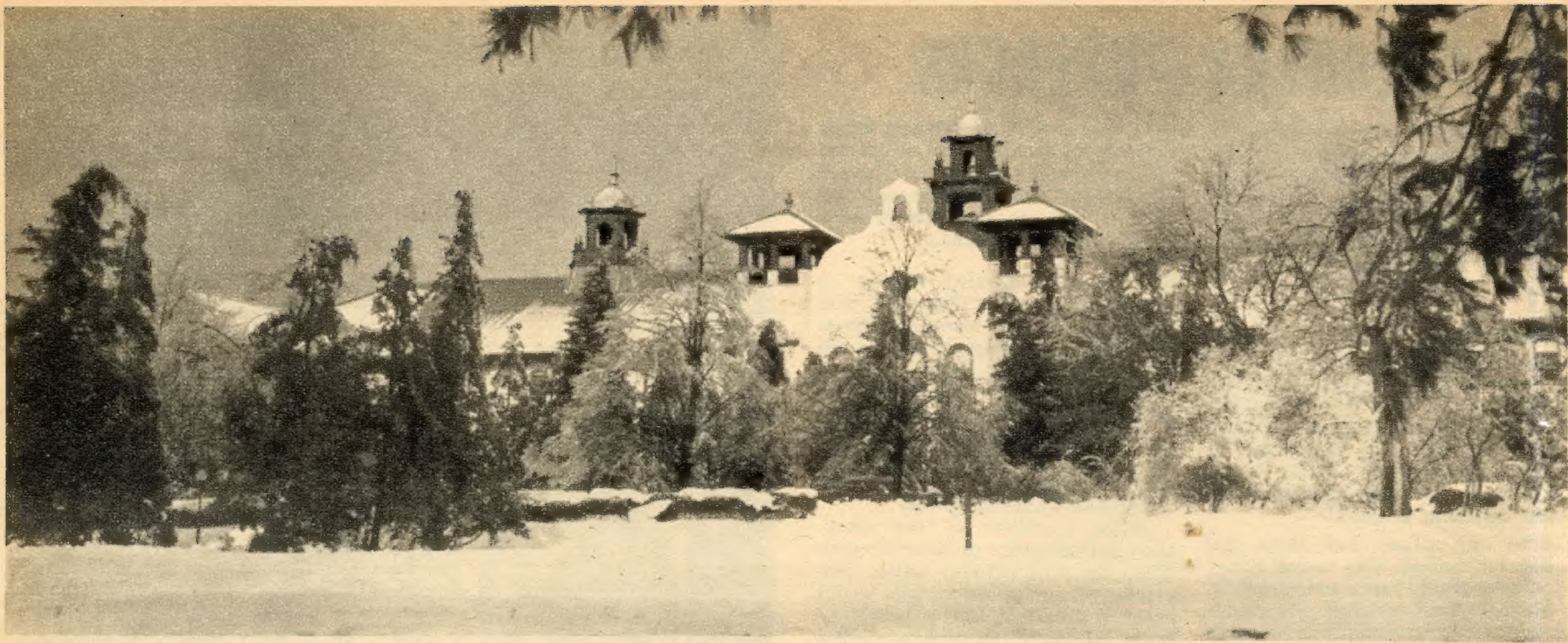
This is the 13th of a series of articles which not only describe New Jersey's colleges and universities, but tell the story of the growth and traditions of individual colleges within the state, picture their roles in modern education and explain how they plan to meet what has been called "an impending tide of students."

Next Sunday: The second and concluding article on Teachers Colleges.



James M. Green Hall on the Hillwood Lakes campus to which Trenton State Teachers College moved in 1931 from downtown Trenton home shown at right. Latter was opened on St. Patrick's Day of 1856.





ABOVE: Southern California's mission buildings inspired architecture for structures at Montclair, opened in 1908 as second state Normal school.

BELOW: Newark's "school in the garden" was built in 1912—and transferred to state control the following year. It had been "city normal" since 1855.

of adequate appropriations to its teacher college tree, although the full state of shocking undernourishment didn't become obvious until the 1951 bond issue. What preceded 1951 was not a mere 10 years or 20 years of neglect; it stretched all the way back beyond 1855. To understand teacher education today it is well to know the struggles of the past.

First of all, the bitter battle of free public education had to be fought and won, and the fight in New Jersey lasted longer and became more intense than in most states. It has been said that "no question, save slavery, ever stirred such passion in the minds and hearts of New Jersey people."

INCH by inch the forces of free education fought back powerful opponents. Many men of good education opposed public education, a prime exception being Professor John Maclean (later president of Princeton University). Mr. Maclean is credited with laying the groundwork for a system of local and state taxation for schools, a state board of education, county superintendents and a normal school.

Through the years gradually-increasing trickles of tax money went for public schools, until by 1850 the state faced a dire need for teachers. Local examinations revealed quantities of candidates who couldn't pass "a decent examination of writing and arithmetic." A Monmouth County educator cried: "We have to depend on the cullings of New England for teachers rather than educating our own sons and daughters."

Governor Rodman Price, called "the father of New Jersey's normal school (at Trenton)", declared in 1854: "I regret to say that our educational system is inferior to that of many of the states . . . we have no training schools, no normal schools for teachers." Against the advice of cronies who declared his support of public education would ruin him politically, Price pressed through the Legislature a bill establishing a state normal school. ("Normal," by the way, from

the French "ecole normale," where teachers were trained for the lower grades).

THE Legislature showed the hesitant generosity of the day. The bill provided for a five-year annual appropriation of \$10,000 and the Legislature didn't much care where the normal school went—as long as some community furnished "suitable location and buildings without expense to the state." New Brunswick, Beverly, Orange, Princeton, Pennington and other towns bid for the school; the Legislature picked up Trenton's offer of free land and \$14,000 for buildings.

Meanwhile two forward-looking principals in Newark and Paterson struggled to find teachers with something more tangible to recommend them than "high moral character" (often a fleeting quality, since newspapers regularly advertised for fugitive schoolmasters who had listened to the Devil). When the State Normal School located in Trenton, Newark and Paterson, city principals opened their own normal schools.

Newark and Paterson actually started before Trenton, both getting underway in April 1855 with evening and Saturday courses at Paterson and Saturday courses at Newark. Teachers and would-be teachers were required to attend, although attendance eventually had to be bolstered by threats to deduct a day's pay for a day's absence.

Newark's normal school fared better than Paterson's; a class of 17 graduated at Newark in 1859 after completing the five-year course—and it wasn't easy. A teacher put in 700 Saturday morning hours to get a diploma. Trenton students didn't put in many more total academic hours.

IN the capital the State Normal School got off haltingly. Principal William F. Phelps met the first class of 15 bewildered and doubting would-be teachers in City Hall on October 1, 1855. Three weeks went by before textbooks arrived and classes had



been in session in city hall for many weeks before an entrance examination was given on Thanksgiving Day. Students found little to be thankful for as they struggled to answer such questions as "Where is the Territory of Nebraska?"

The promised new building was ready St. Patrick's Day, 1856, and the first class of 21 "ladies" and 11 "gentlemen" received diplomas in January 1858. A "Normal School Boarding House Association" built the first woman's "boarding hall" in 1865 (complete with such frills as a separate clothes closet for each girl) and the

state leased the facility. By 1873 dormitory facilities expanded to provide rooms for 194 women and 40 men.

City normal schools enjoyed no such luxuries, of course, but Jersey City opened a "Saturday Normal School" in 1856 and Elizabeth opened a city school in 1888 that lasted until 1917. From time to time city teacher training schools also were organized in Bayonne, Hoboken, Plainfield and Trenton. Requirements were slight: Jersey City in 1856 required only completion of eight grades for en-

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TEACHERS COLLEGES

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trance (and not until 1885 was a high school education necessary). Elsewhere standards went up; in 1876 Paterson required a high school diploma for entrance and offered a full year of study. Two years later Newark met the Paterson standards.

INEVITABLY city normal schools sought state aid, or, at the very least, state recognition. Paterson asked outright for some financial help in 1888. In the same year Newark satisfied itself with requesting merely that its normal school be put on the "same basis as to grade and diploma as the State School in Trenton."

The city schools had some just cause for chafing. City normal school graduates had to pass a state examination to become certified. By coincidence that examination was prepared by Trenton State Normal School. If city graduates at times wondered darkly whether Trenton graduates could pass the examination, they never found the answer—State graduates needed only their diplomas to be fully certified.

As New Jersey's population grew and Trenton's old building became overcrowded, pressure mounted for a State Normal School in urban North Jersey. Peculiarly, when in 1903 the

state heeded the demands and set up \$300,000 for such a school, it ignored the longstanding appeals of Newark and Paterson and instead chose Montclair as the site for New Jersey's second state normal school.

MONTCLAIR debated whether it wanted the school. "Why not?" said the editor of the Montclair Times editorially in January 1903. He got his answer the next week in a letter from the Montclair principal. The principal admitted the acute need for teachers but he viewed with alarm the possibility that the normal school students might do their practice teaching in Montclair schools.

Calling attention to "the above-average intelligence of Montclair children," the principal said flatly: "The patrons of our public schools would never desire their (the schools) use in the training of inexperienced girls—even if the (normal) school were under the most skillful direction." Not too subtly he rejected the latter as a strong possibility.

The Legislature chose Montclair Heights anyway and authorized purchase of 25 acres for the new school. The acreage actually lay in Passaic County; a special legislative act annexing the land to Montclair accounts for the peculiar little boundary-line jog where Passaic and Essex abut at the



College Hall at Glassboro State Teachers College, opened in 1923 to serve south Jersey. The 23-acre estate is known as "Holly Bush."

college. There Montclair State Normal School opened its doors in 1908, with all interested parties not completely agreed on whether they were proud of the architecture inspired "by the mission buildings of Southern California, with a slight touch of the Spanish renaissance."

DEMANDS swelled for more state-financed teacher training. Grandly the Legislature gave permission for more normal schools, but neglected to allocate any money along with the permission. Then in 1912 the City of Newark ordered retrenchment in all city departments, including the Normal School. This struck the Normal School to the academic quick; it had just completed its new "school in the garden" at Broadway and Fourth Ave. (proud leaders called the building "one of the most satisfying architectural efforts ever made in New Jersey").

State and city struck a bargain. State needed another Normal School, city needed to get rid of the administrative headache. "Never," said Assistant Superintendent Kennedy in his 1913 report, "did parties to a contract agree more quickly." Newark City Normal School became Newark State Normal School in 1913 (and in 1916 the state got around to signing a contract to pay Newark \$84,000 a year for five years to buy the building).

Now South Jersey had legitimate reason to pressure for a normal school. Leaders pointed out that their boys and girls could attend the North Jersey normal schools only with difficulty, and in 1917 finally won an appropriation of \$300,000 (later raised to \$500,000). The state bought 23-acre

"Holly Bush," the Glassboro estate of the Thomas Heston Whitney family, as the site for the new school.

Two railroads passed near the property and 122 trains serving South Jersey whistled to a stop in Glassboro every day. In tribute to those railroad lifelines the splendid new administration-classroom building faced the station. One of the 33 seniors who transferred from the three other state normal schools to Glassboro later recalled the first day of school in 1923: "Across a broad field, backed by a glorious wood and approached by a walk shaded by huge oaks, stretched our dream come true."

No such rhapsodizing accompanied the transfer of the 68-year-old Paterson City Normal School to the state in 1923. Paterson had no glorious wood or huge oaks; it merely had an unimaginative red brick home built in 1910—good by standards of the day, but nothing likely to monopolize the conversation at an architectural convention.

FIVE schools in the state fold, one to go. A survey by an out-of-state academic team in 1926 recommended a new state normal school in Jersey City. The citizens of Jersey City had been saying that very thing for almost a decade but the Republican Legislature's deaf ear always faced Hudson County. Finally the Associated Service Clubs of Jersey City bluntly told the state's political leaders that unless funds were forthcoming they would carry the fight to the state's service clubs. This time the Legislature heard—and voted \$1,215,000 for a Jersey City State Normal School.

Jersey City's architect evidently had



Gothic tower at Jersey City State Normal School, successor to the Teacher Training School, is said to be "equal of any at Princeton."

one eye on Princeton; since he drew a building that would have looked perfect on McCosh Walk at Princeton University. In collegiate Gothic style, the finished building featured arches and dark oak paneling and stained glass windows in various rooms. Proudly a Jersey City spokesman said in all truth: "The stone spire is said to be the equal of any at Princeton."

The old Jersey City Teacher Training School closed its doors in 1929 and in September of the same year its principal, Dr. W. A. Messler, became principal of this new Gothic wonder of the teaching world. While Jersey City State Normal didn't grow directly out of the Teacher Training School (as Newark and Paterson had), the relationship existed. The entering class was made up of transfer students from Montclair, Newark and the home-town teacher training school, and much of the faculty came from the same sources.

Now after 74 years all half dozen branches grew on the teacher-training shoot planted in 1855. The long, slow evolution continued—at last beginning to center about refinements in the overall statewide program rather than within individual schools. This awareness that all of the normal schools were part of a single purpose took some strong selling—for years the individual colleges seemed only moderately aware of one another.

TWO reports criticized the schools sharply for their seeming inability to coordinate their curricula. In 1917, for example, an out-of-state survey team wondered why, "in matters of education, the normal schools of New Jersey have relatively little relation to one another." A second report in 1926 asked much the same question, particularly criticizing the failure to work out a good program for preparing high school teachers.

Everything seemed to come together in 1926. That year for the first time all normal schools had to report to the state commissioner of education, rather than to individual members of a committee within the State Board of Education. Often in the past the ability of a school to win funds depended as much on the strength of the school's committee member as it did on the merit of the program.

New Jersey's weakness in preparing high school teachers came glaringly to the fore in a 1926-27 report which showed New Jersey supplied only 11.5 per cent of the teachers in the state's high schools—about one in eight. Of those trained in New Jersey normal schools, nearly all at the high school level taught music or home economics or shop or other subjects not requiring a degree.

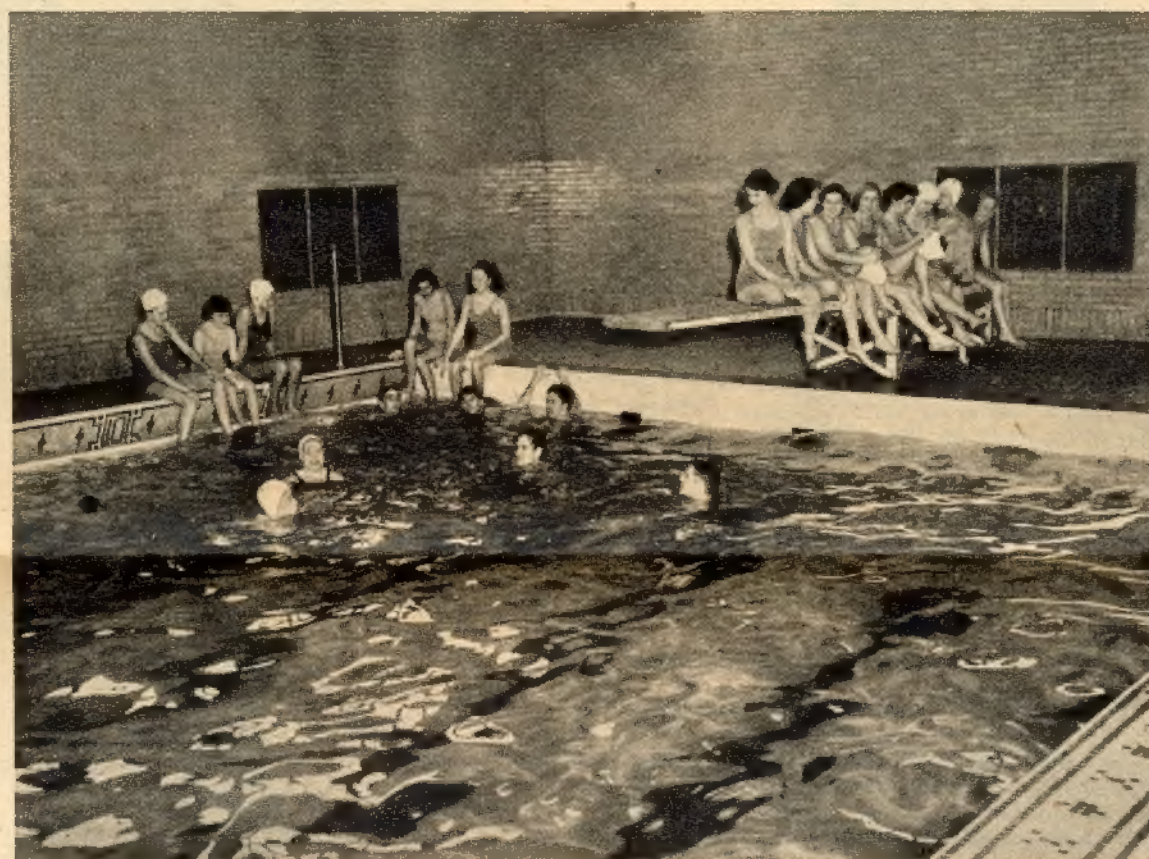
Inadequate degree programs—that was the weakness. Trenton in 1925 had been granted the right to conduct a four-year course and to grant a B.S. degree in education, but few graduates of the program were yet available. Heavy attention to preparation for elementary teaching had placed emphasis on two or three-year programs.

PUBLIC school attendance rose amazingly in New Jersey. Enrollment in the state's elementary schools dou-

bled between 1904 and 1926, to 623,000 in the latter year. High school attendance rose six times in the same period, reaching a new high of 90,000 in 1925-26. Clearly something had to be done; clearly the high schools could no longer depend alone on liberal arts colleges to supply high school teachers.

New Jersey met the challenge by converting Montclair to a four-year degree-granting teachers college in 1927—said to be the first teacher training institute in the country devoted exclusively to secondary teacher training. Trenton continued to train both elementary and secondary teachers, although granting degrees only to the latter.

As the prosperous 1920s waned, the normal schools went through a bewildering maze of two-year, three-year and four-year courses. Immediately ahead lay full teacher college status for all six, but the transition period created outward confusion—particu-



Swimming pool on Hillwood Lakes campus gives Trenton State the distinction of being the only state teachers college so equipped.

larly since some academic diehards clung more or less stubbornly to the belief that two years sufficed to train an elementary teacher.

PARADOXICALLY the one thing which should have slowed the transition to full teacher college status—the depression—speeded it up. The reason: Public schools hired fewer teachers and made them responsible for more students. That meant the two-year normal school programs turned out too many teachers; so, quite simply, the state approved plans to keep students in all the schools for four years. Between 1934 and 1937 the other four normal schools joined Montclair and Trenton in attaining degree-granting status (although, surprisingly, some two and three-year programs continued until 1939).

Not that the depression didn't cut as cruelly into the teachers colleges as it cut into everything else. The cruellest smash of all was the fact that the bottom dropped out just at a time when it appeared the Legislature had awakened to the need to bring the

teacher training program up to adequate levels.

More money had been forthcoming. The state didn't permit miserliness to ruin either the usefulness or the appearance of Glassboro in 1923 or Jersey City in 1930. Those original buildings were (and still are) good, sound, attractive structures. The limitations of Trenton, Paterson and Montclair were recognized, and the Legislature approved plans to move Paterson to a new 120-acre campus donated by the City of Paterson. It favorably considered a plan to build a new combination auditorium-cafeteria-classroom building at Montclair. A proposal to shift Trenton out of the city moved off the drawing board.

Black Friday struck the stock market and eddied out to the rest of the land. The Legislature pulled tight the purse strings. Away went the appropriations for new buildings at Paterson and Montclair. Away even went a \$55,000 appropriation to landscape

swerved objections by saying: "If the school doesn't get the pool now it will never get one." How right she was!

It took until 1936 to make the move from midtown Trenton to Hillwood Lakes complete; by the time the last piece of equipment and the last faculty member had been moved to the handsome red brick colonial buildings in Ewing Township the depression had closed down deeply and lamentably on the six teachers colleges.

TEACHERS Colleges they all were, but what should have been a supreme moment became only a time of hollow success. Funds became less and less available; the rise to full degree-granting status was like getting a promotion accompanied by a cut in salary.

It was enough to give a teachers college (or six of them) an inferiority complex. Liberal arts exponents kept hammering the theme that teachers colleges didn't adequately prepare high school teachers, often arguing in complete ignorance of the fact that the two years added to the old normal school curricula were devoted almost entirely to broad liberal arts courses.

The fact that teachers college student enrollment had become overwhelmingly female didn't help, either. Men had left the teaching profession in droves when it became evident that a man couldn't marry and support a family on what he could make by teaching. Many a graduating class between 1890 and 1930 didn't have a single male student on the roll. Indeed, one student got national publicity in 1930 merely by being the only male enrolled among 300 women at Jersey City.

NEVERTHELESS, the teachers colleges performed notably. Their graduates found ready employment—and succeeded in the state's public schools. New Jersey's teacher college undergraduates stacked up reasonably well in comparison with other colleges of all kinds in averages on national tests, although even the teachers colleges themselves acknowledged that admission standards sometimes were porous enough to permit poor students to slip into college.

There seemed no reason to celebrate the 80th anniversary of New Jersey teacher education in 1935, partially because in those depression days no one celebrated much of anything, and partially because in the change from normal schools to teachers colleges the six state schools found themselves with only the most meager traditions.

Yet the colleges found in bad economic times a kinship. They were being drawn together in adversity at last—prepared to move for self-improvement, prepared eventually to sell their need for new facilities to the public. An old chapter came to a close as the normal schools became teachers colleges: A new chapter reached a height with the battle for 1951's 15-million-dollar bond appropriation.

That battle, and the exciting story of what it has done for teachers colleges in New Jersey, is a story in itself; and it's a story of one tree—with six branches.